

# Morale Education in the American Army

WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE  
WAR OF 1812 · CIVIL WAR

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"THOMAS JEFFERSON," "ABRAHAM LINCOLN"

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## INTRODUCTION

ON THE fateful morning of D day the invasion troops which were about to cross the English Channel and storm Hitler's so-called Atlantic Wall listened to the reading of General Dwight Eisenhower's Order of the Day. The Allied Supreme Commander told his men:

"Soldiers, sailors and airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force:

"You are about to embark upon the great crusade toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving peoples everywhere march with you.

"You will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe and security for ourselves in a free world.

"Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle hardened. He will fight savagely.

"But this is the year 1944. Much has happened since the Nazi triumphs of 1940-41.

"The United Nations have inflicted upon the Germans great defeat in open battle man to man. Our air offensive has seriously reduced their strength in the air and their capacity to wage war on the ground.

"Our home fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in weapons and munitions of war and placed at our disposal great reserves of trained fighting men.

"The tide has turned.

"The free men of the world are marching together to victory. I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty, and skill in battle.

"We will accept nothing less than full victory.

"Good luck, and let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking."

Events since the first assault on the Norman beaches have clearly demonstrated that most of the soldiers understood the great crusade . . . to eliminate Nazi tyranny. In an editorial entitled, "The American Soldier," the *New York Times* pointed out on June 30, 1944, that the fall of Cherbourg confirmed the fact that the American army had "come of age," and that its "fighting morale" was no longer a matter of doubt.

"It has been the hackneyed theme of enemy propaganda," it continued, "that American soldiers are homesick, jazz-sick, immature boys who do not know what they are fighting for and whose fighting morale could best be undermined by lullabies of home or an offer of the joy of enemy prison camps."

The battle of Normandy like those in Africa, in Italy, and in the Pacific has blasted this theory.

One of the nation's most colorful heroes, Sergeant Charles E. Kelly of Pittsburgh, explained recently that he is fighting "to get rid of the Nazis, so we can make sure there won't be another war." He is fighting for the kids he hopes to have some day. "Progress," reflects Kelly, "you'll never stop it. I've seen 23 years of this life, but there's no sense in seeing it go on and on the way it has. We have got to get our kids more than we had. We're fighting for something more."

Unfortunately, it is not likely that all our soldiers understand the war to such a high degree as Sergeant Kelly. But as a result of the intensive program instituted by the Army Special Services Division and the experience of battle more and more are learning.

The Soviet Union has for years emphasized the importance of educating the Red Army soldier as to why he is in uniform, and its orientation program has borne fruit since June 22, 1941. Both the British and the United States, on the other hand, entered the war without any provision for informing the fighting

men why they had taken up arms. But the military soon discovered that it was vital for the men to know. They learned that soldiers who did not know what they were fighting for were the most frequent victims of battle neurosis, the mental disease afflicting soldiers who break under the strain of battle. They also discovered that letters from soldiers with poor morale had a devastating effect on the morale of men and women on the home front.

The British set up their Army Bureau of Current Affairs in September 1941, featuring a system of forums and discussion groups on the background of the war and the issues at stake in the conflict. That same year General Ben Lear of the American Army started orientation lectures for the Second Army in Tennessee because he found that an indifferent mind made an indifferent soldier. General Lear took as his motto a quotation from Oliver Cromwell, "Give me the man who knows that for which he fights and loves that which he knows."

The program has grown considerably since 1941, even though there still remains much to be done. The army orientation program is not uniform throughout the services, and there are places where excellent ideas rarely get beyond the paper stage. There is a distinct need, moreover, of overcoming fear in military circles of reactionary attacks at home. Furthermore, not all military men realize that beautiful phrases and inspiring lectures will not by themselves build good morale. Jewish soldiers will not be too impressed by words when they read of the outbreak of anti-Semitism in Boston and other centers, nor will Negro soldiers as long as discrimination stares them in the face in most branches of the armed services and Jim Crow for their people at home. Words and deeds must be consistent if the soldiers are truly to understand what they are fighting for.

But these shortcomings will be met and solved, for the military knows today that orientation is not a frill of military training but an essential part of it. The army's program together with the program of the United Nations are producing more and more soldiers who are conscious, aware and alert, who have a faith in

the cause of the United Nations, and who understand the various devices used by the enemy and its sympathizers in our midst to divide our people. The slogan of the army is: "The American soldier is to be not just the best trained soldier in the world, not just the best-equipped soldier in the world, but the best informed soldier in the world."

What is being done today in our armed forces to educate the soldiers is part of a distinct American tradition. It is the aim of this booklet to tell the story of this tradition and to illustrate in some detail the efforts made during three previous people's wars in our history to show the men in the American Army why they were fighting. This study does not pretend to exhaustiveness in this direction. But the writer believes that the story told here will demonstrate how vital to victory is an educational program which aims to overcome defeatist propaganda and to develop among the soldiers a clear understanding of why they fight.

## THE WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE

THERE were few people in America or in Europe in July, 1776, who would have predicted that the American army could finally overcome so powerful a nation as Britain. The odds against an American victory were overwhelming. Great Britain, the richest country in the world, furnished her soldiers and the hired Hessian mercenary troops with the finest equipment. The army Washington commanded was hungry, ragged, and ill-housed. One needs but to remember Washington's touching description of the ragged Continentals during their winter encampments to realize the obstacles that had to be surmounted before victory could be secured:

"To see men, without clothes to cover their nakedness, without blankets to lie on, without shoes, by which their marches might be traced by the blood from their feet, and almost as often without provisions as with them, marching through the frost and snow, and at Christmas take up their winter-quarters within a day's march from the enemy, without a house or hut to cover them, till they could be built, and submitting to it without a murmur is a proof of patience and obedience which in my opinion can scarce be paralleled."<sup>1</sup>

Whenever he was asked how it was possible that soldiers "oftentimes half starved; [and] always in Rags" could triumph over an enemy superior in numbers and equipment, Washington invariably answered that soldiers who understood why they were fighting and believed in the cause could achieve miracles.<sup>2</sup>

At first the problem of sustaining the morale of the Revolutionary army was not a serious one. The fervor of the early volunteers who took up arms in the battle for freedom is epitomized

mized in the noble letter of farewell to his bride by the Rhode Island Quaker, Nathanael Greene. "Slavery," he wrote, "shuts up every avenue that leads to knowledge and leaves the soul ignorant of its importance. . . I am determined to defend my rights and maintain my freedom or sell my life in the attempt."<sup>3</sup>

But the task of keeping alive this enthusiasm and morale was not a simple one. War weariness increased as the years passed. Moreover, the American strategy of retreating in order to avoid pitched battles often weakened the morale of the fighting men, since it left the impression that the enemy was invincible. Finally, the constant struggle against starvation and the elements put a heavy strain on morale.

To maintain army morale, to keep the early zeal burning bright in the hearts of the fighting men, was essential for victory. Some work in this direction was performed by private citizens, especially by members of the clergy. In a scholarly study, Alice M. Baldwin tells of the part played by these men in preserving army morale:

"When news arrived in 1777," she writes, "that Washington needed help, he [Reverend Samuel Ellis of Bradford, Connecticut] read aloud the notice from the pulpit, stopped the service, adjourned to the green in front of the meeting-house, where a company was at once formed and the Rev. Mr. Ellis made its captain. The sharp-tongued John Cleaveland is said to have preached his whole parish into the army and then to have gone himself, while the Rev. Thomas Allen, of Pittsfield, persuaded a whole discontented brigade in General [Benjamin] Lincoln's army to remain in service. There was many another pastor who encouraged recruiting and kept up the spirit of his people during the days of suffering and discouragement. They pled for union and sacrifice and persistent effort until the war was won. 'It is better to be free among the dead, than slaves among the living,' said Zabdiel Adams in 1782."<sup>4</sup>

Sometimes ordinary civilians stepped in to lend their aid in lifting the morale of the fighting men. A noteworthy example is the action of a committee of Pennsylvania women which raised close to \$300,000 in 1780 to purchase clothing for the

soldiers. There were 1,645 contributors—all women—ranging from Phyllis, a Negro slave, to the Marchioness de Lafayette. The effect of this gift on army morale is vividly described in a letter from an American officer in camp.

"The patriotism of the women of Philadelphia," he wrote, "is a subject of conversation with the army. Had I poetic genius I would sit down and write an ode in praise of it. . . Nothing has been more discouraging for some time past, than to believe we were neglected, or almost lost from the remembrance of our fellow-citizens."<sup>5</sup>

Undoubtedly the work of the pulpit and of ordinary citizens was important, but essentially the maintenance of army morale rested upon the shoulders of the officers. Organization of various activities to sustain army morale during the Revolutionary War was often defective in light of the needs of the day. But with all its limitations the work performed by Washington and his colleagues enabled the continental army to pass from Valley Forge to Yorktown. Great credit is due these men that the morale of the fighting men did not collapse in the face of almost insuperable obstacles.

One such officer was Colonel William Prescott, leader of the Boston militia at the Battle of Bunker Hill. A soldier who participated in that battle, wrote later: "I tell ye, that, if it had not been for Colonel Prescott, there would have been no fight. He was all night and all the morning talking to the soldiers, and moving about with his sword among them in such a way that they all felt like fight."<sup>6</sup> Inspired by a leader who did not hesitate to discuss the issues of the conflict with his men, the soldiers held their fire like veterans and twice hurled back the British. The British lost 226 dead and 828 wounded; the Americans 140 dead and 171 wounded. When George Washington, just appointed Commander-in-Chief of the American forces by the Continental Congress, heard the stirring story of Bunker Hill, he exclaimed: "Then the liberties of the country are safe."

Even before the war started, Washington placed great stress on the education and enlightenment of the soldiers. When in

November, 1775, Colonel Woodford inquired of Washington what he should emphasize while training his men, the Commander-in-Chief urged him "to impress upon the mind of every man, from the first to the lowest, the importance of the cause, and what it is they are contending for."<sup>7</sup> By means of "General Orders" issued from his headquarters, Washington saw to it that the soldiers knew at all times what it was "they are contending for." On July 2, 1776, he ordered the following statement, drawn up by himself, read to all the soldiers:

"The time is now near at hand which must probably determine, whether Americans are to be Freemen, or Slaves; whether they are to have any property they can call their own; whether their Houses, and Farms, are to be pillaged and destroyed, and they consigned to a State of Wretchedness from which no human efforts will probably deliver them. The fate of unborn Millions will now depend, under God, on the Courage and Conduct of this army. Our cruel and unrelenting Enemy leaves us no choice but a brave resistance, or the most abject submission; this is all we can expect. We have therefore to resolve to conquer or die: Our own Country's Honor, all call upon us for a vigorous and manly exertion, and if we now shamefully fail, we shall become infamous to the whole world. Let us therefore rely upon the goodness of the Cause, and the aid of the Supreme Being, in whose hands Victory is, to animate and encourage us to great and noble Actions. The Eyes of all our Countrymen are now upon us, and we shall have their blessings, and praises, if happily we are the instruments of saving them from the tyranny meditated against them. Let us therefore animate and encourage each other, and shew the whole world, that a Freeman contending for Liberty on his own ground is superior to any slavish mercenary on earth."<sup>8</sup>

Three days later, July 5, 1776, Washington again ordered the men gathered together, this time to listen to a reading of the Declaration of Independence. This, he tells us in his "Order Book," was followed by a discussion, in which the soldiers participated, of the "grounds and reasons" for the war.<sup>9</sup>

Throughout the early part of the war, Washington conducted

an educational campaign to overcome a serious problem in the army: local prejudices and jealousies. So strong were these prejudices at the beginning of the conflict that the Commander-in-Chief observed that "Connecticut wants no Massachusetts man in their corps; Massachusetts thinks there is no necessity for a Rhode Islander to be introduced among them." Washington fought this tendency constantly, never foregoing an occasion to speak out against particularism. On July 4, 1775, his "General Orders" to the soldiers reminded them that they were "the troops of the United Provinces of North America, and it is hoped that all Distinctions of colonies will be laid aside." A year later, on July 17, 1776, he called upon all the officers in the Continental Army to initiate a program to overcome "the unhappy pernicious distinctions and jealousies between the troops of different governments." The officers, he emphasized, should use every opportunity to "inculcate and press home to the Soldiery, the Necessity of order and harmony among them, who are embarked in one common cause, and mutually contending for all that Freemen hold dear."

"I am persuaded," he added "if the Officers will but exert themselves, these animosities, this disorder, will in a great measure subside, and nothing being more essential to the Service than that it should, I am hopeful nothing on their parts will be wanting to effect it."<sup>10</sup>

Shortly after this suggestion, the officers instituted a series of discussions within the regiments on the need of harmony and unity and the detrimental effects of local jealousies. At the same time Washington contributed to the discussions by means of a "General Order" issued to the troops on August 1, 1776:

"The General most earnestly entreats the officers, and soldiers, to consider the consequences; that they can no way assist our cruel enemies more effectually, than making division among ourselves; That the Honor and Success of the army, and the safety of our bleeding Country, depends upon harmony and good agreement with each other; That the Provinces are all United to oppose the common enemy, and all distinctions sunk in the name

of an American; to make this honorable, and preserve the Liberty of our Country, ought to be our only emulation, and he will be the best Soldier, and the best Patriot, who contributes most to this glorious work, whatever his Station, or from whatever part of the Continent, he may come: Let all distinctions of Nations, Countries, and Provinces, therefore be lost in the generous contest, who shall behave with the most Courage against the enemy, and the most kindness and good humour to each other. If there are any officers, or soldiers, so lost to virtue and a love of their Country as to continue in such practices after this order; the General assures them, and is directed by Congress to declare, to the whole Army, that such persons shall be severely punished and dismissed from the service with disgrace." <sup>11</sup>

Later Washington said of his educational program to combat particularism: "I have labored ever since I have been in the service, to discourage all kinds of local attachments and distinctions of country, denominating the whole by the greater name of AMERICAN." <sup>12</sup>

Army morale was probably at its lowest ebb in the fall of 1776 during the heartbreaking days of the retreat through Manhattan, Westchester, and New Jersey. Everything appeared lost. On December 23, 1776, Colonel Joseph Reed wrote to Washington warning him that "some enterprise must be undertaken in our present circumstances, or we must give up the cause." <sup>13</sup> The Commander-in-Chief shared Reed's opinion. He knew that the morale of the soldiers and that of the people on the home front might completely disintegrate if they believed the enemy to be invincible. Indeed, Washington had already taken two significant steps to lift the sagging morale of the fighting men and the citizens in general. For one thing, he had commissioned Tom Paine, author of *Common Sense*, to write a new pamphlet to arouse the people. For another, he had made plans for "an important stroke" which would give to American affairs "a more pleasing aspect than they now have."

Seated by a campfire, holding a drum between his knees and scribbling away furiously on sheets spread on the drumhead, Paine, who had accompanied General Washington's forces during

their retreat across New Jersey, wrote *The Crisis*, No. I. By the time the pamphlet was finished, Washington had decided upon the "important stroke." On Christmas eve, 1776, Washington and his decimated forces—about 2,400 men with horse and artillery—were rowed across the Delaware by the heroic Marblehead fishermen for a surprise attack upon the slumbering Hessians at Trenton. Before the troops received the final command to leave camp, they were called together by Washington to listen to a reading of *The Crisis*. The half-starved, shivering soldiers listened as an officer read from this great document:

"These are the times that try men's souls: The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the services of his country; but he that stands it Now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly; 'Tis dearness only that gives everything its value. Heaven knows how to set a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed, if so celestial an article as FREEDOM should not be highly rated. . .

"By perseverance and fortitude we have the prospect of a glorious issue; by cowardice and submission, the sad choice of a variety of evils—a ravaged country—a depopulated city—habitations without safety, and slavery without hope—our homes turned into barracks and bawdy-houses for Hessians, and a future race to provide for whose fathers we shall doubt of. Look on this picture, and weep over it! and if there yet remains one thoughtless wretch who believes it not, let him suffer it unlamented." \*

These words inspired the disheartened soldiers to great deeds. And those who battled the fogs, a blizzard, and the swift current of the Delaware and wiped out the Hessian garrison below Trenton that Christmas eve fought like inspired men. They proved

\* The title page of *The Crisis* stressed the fact that it had been "by the orders of Gen. Washington read to each regiment of the army." (See Boston, 1860, edition. For complete text, see James S. Allen, ed., *Thomas Paine* [New York, 1937].)

the truth of Washington's assertion that soldiers who knew and understood why they were fighting would in the end be victorious.

It is impossible to exaggerate the miraculous effect upon American morale of the events of December, 1776.\* Washington's bold stroke at Trenton, by lifting the drooping spirits of the American people, saved the cause of the Revolution. Paine's pamphlet, too, immeasurably strengthened American morale. James Cheetham, a contemporary, summed up the effect of *The Crisis* as follows:

"The number was read in every camp, to every corporal's guard, and in the army and out of it had more than the intended effect. The convention of New York, reduced by dispersion, occasioned by alarm, to nine members, was rallied and reanimated. Militiamen who, already tired of the war, were straggling from the army, returned. Hope succeeded to despair, cheerfulness to gloom, and firmness to irresolution." 14

Washington himself paid the highest tributes to the significance of Paine's pamphlets in lifting the morale of the soldiers.

\* The conduct of the British and Hessian troops at this time was another important factor in the rising morale of the Continental Army. These troops brought ruin and misery to many a prosperous countryside in America. In New Jersey, for example, the ravaging hordes seized whatever they could lay their hands on, including damask napkins, tablecloths, pillowcases, cambric aprons, shifts, silk bonnets, lace handkerchiefs, gowns, and quilted petticoats.

"Widespread destruction," writes Leonard Lundin, "was caused by the routine activities of the [British] army. After using such firewood as the inhabitants had stored up for their own use during the winter, the troops burned the loose planks and timber in the possession of carpenters, pried boards off shops, outhouses, and even dwelling houses, cut down fruit trees for fuel, and finally brought in the fences from the countryside surrounding the garrisons." (*Cockpit of the Revolution: The War for Independence in New Jersey*, Princeton, N. J., 1940, pp. 173-74.)

The reports of these enemy activities filled many an American soldier with a burning hatred of the British and Hessian troops. They also led to the organization of guerrilla brigades among the civilians. On December 14, 1776, a Hessian officer wrote in his diary: "It is now very hard to travel in New Jersey. The peasant *canaille* met our people singly and in groups without weapons, but have their muskets lying hidden in some nearby bushes, ditch, or the like; when they think they can achieve their purpose successfully and see one person or only a few who belong to our army, they shoot at their heads, then throw their muskets away again at once, and act as if they knew nothing about it." (*Ibid.*, p. 178.)

On September 18, 1782, he thanked Paine for the gift to the Commander-in-Chief of fifty copies of his latest publication [either No. XI of *The Crisis*, dated May 22, 1782, or *A Supernumary Crisis*, dated May 31, 1782], "for the amusement of the Army."

"For this intention" Washington went on, "you have my sincere thanks, not only on my own Account, but for the pleasure, I doubt not, the Gentlemen of the Army will receive from the perusal of your Pamphlets." 15

Pamphlets written during a special crisis were of the utmost importance in educating the Revolutionary soldiers. But Washington and other officers recognized the need for a permanent, continuous process of enlightenment. On July 19, 1777, Washington wrote to a committee of Congress urging the establishment of a regular printing service connected with the army. X

"A small travelling Press to follow Headquarters would be productive of many eminent advantages," he wrote. "It would enable us to give speedy and exact information of any military transactions that take place with the proper comments upon them and thereby frustrate the pernicious tendency of falsehood and misrepresentation, which, in my opinion, of whatever complexion they may be, are in the main detrimental to our cause. If the People had a channel of intelligence that from its usual authenticity they could look up to with confidence, they might often be preserved from that despondency, which they are apt to fall into from the exaggerated pictures our enemies and their Emissaries among us commonly draw of any misfortunes we meet with and from that diffidence of truths favorable to us which they must naturally feel from the frequent deception they are exposed to, by the extravagant colorings our friends often give to our successes . . . An ingenious man to accompany this Press and be employed wholly in writing for it might render it singularly beneficial." 16

Unfortunately, Congress failed to respond to Washington's valuable suggestion. A resolution was introduced in the Continental Congress on January 5, 1778, authorizing General Wash- ✓



ington "to employ a Printer with a travelling Press to attend the Army, and that it be under the Inspection of himself or such other Person or Persons as he shall appoint, who shall not admit *personal* altercations, or *other Matter, not tending to promote the public Welfare*, to be asserted in any of the Publications or Hand Bills of the Army, and shall constantly transmit some of each impression to the President for the Perusal of Congress." <sup>17</sup>

The resolution was considered and tabled. It would seem from the clause that all publications and handbills of the Army had to be transmitted to Congress for examination, that Congress was not ready to allow the military control of an educational program.

But the need of a press in the army continued. Henry Lee pointed out to General Nathanael Greene in April, 1778, that the absence of a public press in the army was a serious shortcoming. "The proper communication of events," he observed, "would tend very much to stir up the patriotism of the people." General Greene agreed, and sought personally to convince citizens to establish a press in the Southern districts. "Nothing will contribute more to the recovery of these Southern States," he emphasized, "than a proper channel to convey intelligence to the people, for want of which they are kept in ignorance and subject to every British imposition." A few days later he wrote to Congress urging support for the project. "A printing press is exceedingly wanted," he appealed.<sup>18</sup> But this appeal like Washington's fell on deaf ears.

Rebuffed by Congress, Washington used his influence to secure a newspaper for the soldiers in other ways. At his suggestion, General Knox spoke to Shepard Kollock, a printer in Chatham, New Jersey, on the need for a paper for the soldiers stationed in that state. On February 16, 1779, Kollock began publication of the *New Jersey Journal* which the soldiers greeted joyfully. "The soldiers only five miles away," writes James M. Lee, historian of American journalism, "subscribed liberally, considering how pitifully small were the wages received, and the officers often furnished, in exchange for army printing, the paper for which the *Journal* was printed." <sup>19</sup>

In the main, however, the absence of printing presses and editors hampered Washington and his colleagues in their morale-lifting activities. In the spring of 1778 these activities were especially vital for the success of the Revolutionary cause. Benjamin Franklin's brilliant diplomacy had won for the cause of the Revolution indispensable support, in the form of the French-American alliance against England. Franklin had long been working, with considerable success, to secure arms and other material aid from France. But the most effective aid that could be secured was a military alliance, joint military action. And though the monarchy of France and the new republic of the United States were worlds apart politically, the conflict between the British and French empires was utilized by the American revolutionists for the cause of the Revolution.

But before the American representatives in Paris had consummated the alliance, the British launched a "peace offensive" to prevent such consummation. On February 17, 1778, Lord North, Prime Minister of England, proposed, and Parliament approved, a measure of conciliation, granting Americans everything under the sun but independence. No revenue taxes were to be levied, the coercive measures and the tea duty were to be repealed, full pardon was to be granted to all Americans, and all acts of Parliament relating to the colonies, adopted after February, 1763, were to be suspended. Commissioners were sent from England to America to present these terms.

Simultaneously the Tories—the "fifth column" in the American Revolution—swung into action to persuade the soldiers and the people to endorse the British terms and end the war. The leading argument advanced by the Tories was based on religious prejudice—in this case against Catholicism. Playing upon anti-Catholic prejudice in America, the Tories argued that an alliance with France—a Catholic country—would result in Catholicizing America.

*Rivington's Royal Gazette*, a Tory paper which was published in New York, warned the soldiers that if they did not rise up and demand a negotiated peace with England, the Catholic

church would be established in America after the war. The following situation would prevail in 1789, it informed the men:

"November 11th, 1789—The Catholic religion is not only outwardly professed, but has made the utmost progress among all ranks of people here, owing in a great measure, to the unwearied labors of the Dominican and Franciscan friars, who omit no opportunity of scattering the seeds of religion and converting the wives and daughters of heretics. We hear that the building formerly called the Old South Meeting is fitting up for a Cathedral, and that several old meeting-houses are soon to be repaired for convents." <sup>20</sup>

"Is it possible," the *Pennsylvania Ledger*, another Tory sheet, asked the soldiers, "we can now wish for a final separation from Britain, the ancient and chief support of the Protestant religion in the world . . . ?" <sup>21</sup> And Benedict Arnold, who had turned traitor, used the same argument in an appeal to the American soldiers, urging them to join him and go over to the British.

One of the strongest manifestations of anti-Catholic sentiment in colonial America was the observance of Pope Day on November 5th. Parades were held on that day and effigies of the Pope and the devil were burned. When Washington learned that plans were being made to celebrate Pope Day in the army in 1775 he issued the following order:

"As the Commander-in-Chief has been apprized of a design formed for the observance of that ridiculous and childish custom of burning the effigy of the Pope, he cannot help expressing his surprise that there should be officers and soldiers in this army so void of common sense as not to see the impropriety of such a step at this juncture, at a time when we are soliciting, and have really obtained the friendship and alliance of the people of Canada, whom we ought to consider as brethren embarked in the same cause—the defense of the Liberty of America. At this juncture and under such circumstances, to be insulting their religion, is so monstrous as not to be suffered or excused; indeed, instead of offering the most remote insult, it is our duty to address public thanks to these our brethren, as to them we are

indebted for every late happy success over the common enemy in Canada." <sup>22</sup>

Once again Washington called upon his officers to organize an educational program, this time to defeat the negotiated peace maneuvers. He himself issued several "General Orders" to the troops pointing out that "a Peace without independence" would be "to the last degree dishonourable and ruinous." \* Furthermore, he attacked all efforts to divide and confuse the soldiers through appeals to religious prejudices, pointing out in his "General Order," dated April 23, 1778, that:

"Our Enemies finding themselves unable to reduce us by the force of arms are now practicing every insidious Art to gain time and disunite us, but the General hopes that men who have struggled with every difficulty and encountered every danger are not to be conquered by artifices which are so easily exposed." <sup>23</sup>

The educational program instituted at Washington's command to meet the British and Tory negotiated peace drive was eminently successful. The soldiers refused to be duped, and were determined to fight until victory and independence were gained. They would fight, moreover, side by side with their French allies. One soldier expressed the prevailing sentiment in the Continental Army when he wrote in his diary in May, 1778: "We had rejoicing on the account of the French declaring for us Independent. . . ." <sup>24</sup>

The alliance with France an established fact, Washington

\* Even as early as August, 1776, Washington had issued a "General Order" to the troops to combat rumors of a negotiated peace offer. "The General, being informed, to his great surprise, that a report prevails and is industriously spread far and wide that Lord Howe has made propositions of peace, calculated more probably to lull us into a false security, his duty obliges him to declare that no such offer has been made by Lord Howe, but on the contrary, from the best intelligence he can procure, the Army may expect an attack as soon as the wind and tide shall prove favourable. He hopes therefore, every man's mind and arms will be prepared for action, and when called to it, show our enemies, and the whole world, that Free-men contending on their own land, are superior to any mercenaries on earth." (John C. Fitzpatrick, *The Writings of George Washington*, Vol. V, p. 469.)

was anxious that nothing should be tolerated to weaken the ties that bound the Allies. There was need for concern on this score. Disputes had arisen between American and French officers over questions of strategy and advancements. The Commander-in-Chief insisted that an end be put to these disputes, and that they be kept from the rank-and-file soldiers. If, however, the soldiers had already discovered the existence of tension between the American and French officers, they be educated on the importance of preserving and strengthening the alliance. Thus Washington wrote to Major-General Sullivan on September 1, 1778:

"The disagreement between the army under your command and the fleet has given me very singular uneasiness. The continent at large is concerned in our cordiality, and it should be kept up by all possible means, consistent with honor and policy. First impressions you know are generally longest remembered, and will serve to fix in a great degree our national character among the French. In our conduct toward them we should remember that they are a people old in war, very strict in military etiquette, and apt to take fire, where others scarcely seem warmed. Permit me to recommend in the most particular manner, the cultivation of harmony and good agreement, and your endeavors to destroy that ill humor, which may have got into the officers. It is of the greatest importance also, that the minds of the soldiers and the people should know nothing of the misunderstanding, or if it has reached them, that ways may be used to stop its progress and prevent its effects." <sup>25</sup>

By his own conduct Washington sought to educate the soldiers that they were the servants and not the masters of the people. Some officers entertained the view that the Army should dominate rather than serve the people. In fact, in 1782 Washington was asked by a Colonel Lewis Nicola, who had held several meetings with other officers, to assume the title of king. Assurances were even given that the Army would back the move on the ground that the only solution for America's difficulties was the establishment of a monarchy. The proposal drew the fol-

lowing prompt and stinging rebuke from the Commander-in-Chief:

"With a mixture of great surprise and astonishment I have read with attention the Sentiments you have submitted to my perusal. Be assured, Sir, no occurrence in the course of the War has given me more painful sensations than your information of there being such ideas existing in the Army as you have expressed, and I must view with abhorrence, and reprehend with severity . . .

"Let me conjure you then, if you have any regard for your Country, concern for yourself or posterity, or respect for me, banish these thoughts from your Mind, and never communicate, as from yourself, or anyone else, a sentiment of the like Nature." <sup>26</sup>

A year later several politicians and army officers, including Gouverneur Morris and Alexander Hamilton, called upon Washington to lead a coup d'état and seize control of public affairs by armed force. In this way, Hamilton wrote him, the Army officers could be properly rewarded for their sufferings and "justice done to the creditors of the United States." Hamilton ended his letter on a frank note: "In this the influence of the army, properly directed, may operate."

Washington was the "key figure" in the schemes of these men. And when in a dramatic speech to the officers he rebuked the plotters, the scheme was defeated. ". . . For without him," writes Merrill Jensen, "and the officers who were sure to follow him nothing could be done." <sup>27</sup>

Washington resigned his commission as commander of the army to the Continental Congress at Annapolis, Maryland, on December 23, 1783. By this act he showed he had no desire to have the Army run the country.

In fact, as early as March 7, 1778, Washington had written to Thomas Wharton, Junior: "The Army and the Country have a mutual Dependence upon each other and it is of the last Importance that their several duties should be so regulated and enforced as to produce not only the greatest Harmony and good

understanding but the truest Happiness and Comfort to each." Again, in his "Farewell Orders to the Armies of the United States," dated November 2, 1783, Washington reminded the officers and soldiers that when they returned to civil life they should act as citizens of a democracy, not as men determined to become masters of the people.

"Every one may rest assured," he declared, "that much, very much, of the future happiness of the officers and men, will depend on the wise and manly conduct, which shall be adopted by them when they are mingled with the great body of the community." 28

Washington was confident that the soldiers who understood so clearly the democratic principles for which they had fought for seven years would struggle to preserve these liberties. The history of the next few decades proves that this confidence was not misplaced.

## THE WAR OF 1812

THE part performed by George Washington in the education of the soldiers during the Revolution was continued by Andrew Jackson during the War of 1812. Jackson's "Division Orders" to his troops were modeled after Washington's "General Orders," and like them were intended to educate the soldiers as to the reasons why they were fighting. On March 7, 1812, shortly before the War of 1812 started, Jackson issued a stirring "Division Order" which declared:

"But another and nobler feeling should impell us to action. *Who are we? and for what are we going to fight?* Are we the titled Slaves of George the third? the military conscripts of Napoleon the great? or the frozen peasants of the Russian Czar? No—we are the free born sons of America; the citizens of the only republic now existing in the world; and the only people on earth who possess rights, liberties, and property which they dare call their own.

*"For what are we going to fight?* To satisfy the revenge or ambition of a corrupt and infatuated ministry? to place another and another diadem on the head of an apostate republican general? to settle the balance of power among an assassin tribe of Kings and emperors? 'or to preserve to the prince of Blood, and the grand dignitaries of the empire' their overgrown wealth and exclusive privileges? No. Such splendid achievements as these can form no part of the objects of an American war. But we are going to fight for the re-establishment of our national character, misunderstood and vilified at home and abroad; for the protection of our maritime citizens, impressed on board British ships of war and compelled to fight the battles of our enemies against ourselves; to vindicate our right to a free trade, and open a market for the productions of our soil, now perishing on our

hands because the *mistress of the ocean* has forbid us to carry them to any foreign nation; in fine, to seek some indemnity for past injuries, some security against future aggressions, by the conquest of all the British dominions upon the continent of North America.

"Here then is the true and noble principle on which the energies of the nations should be brought into action: *a free people compelled to reclaim by the power of their arms the right which God has bestowed upon them, and which an infatuated King has said they shall not enjoy.*

"In such a contest will the people shrink from the support of their government; or rather will they shrink from the support of themselves? Will they abandon their great unprescriptible rights, and tamely surrender that illustrious national character which was purchased with so much blood in the war of the Revolution? No. Such infamy shall not fall upon us. The advocates of Kingly power shall not enjoy the triumph of seeing a free people desert themselves, and crouch before the slaves of a foreign tyrant. . . ." <sup>29</sup>

The astounding victory scored by the American army under Jackson at the Battle of New Orleans was proof enough of the importance of Old Hickory's policy of arousing understanding of the issues of the struggle among the fighting men. Jackson arrived at New Orleans on December 2, 1814, to find a city totally unprepared to withstand the attack being prepared by the British troops. Little had been done to provide for the defense of the city; neither provisions nor munitions were available. Many of the inhabitants were in a state of panic, and the wealthy citizens were openly proclaiming their willingness to surrender the city rather than risk destruction of their property during a bombardment.

The moment Jackson arrived in New Orleans, he went into action. He ordered earthworks to be thrown up to defend all important positions, and called upon the entire population to work night and day for the defense of the city. He followed up these orders by proclaiming martial law and a *levée en masse*. "No person will be permitted to leave the city," went the pro-

clamation, " . . . no vessels, boats or other craft will be permitted to leave. . . . Street lamps shall be extinguished at the hour of nine at night, after which time persons of every description found in the streets or not in their respective homes . . . shall be apprehended as spies." <sup>30</sup> To those who were ready to surrender the city the moment the enemy scored an initial breakthrough, Jackson is said to have remarked "that he would imitate the example of the Russians at Moscow, and consign the whole city to flames" rather than permit its stores to fall into the hands of the British. <sup>31</sup>

But at no time during the defense of New Orleans did Jackson rely only on martial law and threats of punishment to arouse the citizens and soldiers to a sense of duty. At all points he sought to make clear why they were fighting and sacrificing. The following documents illustrate Jackson's constant concern, during his defense of New Orleans, to arouse a thorough understanding among soldiers and civilians alike of what was at stake in the war:

"Fellow citizens of every description! Remember for what and against whom you contend. For all that can render life desirable—for a country blessed with every gift of nature, for property, for life, for those dearer than either, your wives and children, and for liberty, dearer than all, without which country, life, property, are no longer worth possessing: as even the embraces of wives and children become a reproach to the wretch who could deprive them by his cowardice of those invaluable blessings. You are to contend for all this against an enemy whose continued effort is to deprive you of the last of those blessings, who avows a war of vengeance and desolation, proclaimed and marked by cruelty, lust and horrors unknown to civilized nations."

In an address to the Negro troops under his command Jackson declared:

"*Soldiers!* From the shores of the Mobile I called you to arms. I invited you to share in the perils and to divide the glory of your white countrymen. I expected much from you, for I was

not uninformed of those qualities that must render you so formidable to an invading foe. I knew that you could endure hunger and thirst, and all the hardships of war. I knew that you loved the land of your nativity and that, like ourselves, you had to defend all that is most dear to man, but you surpassed my hopes; I found in you, united to those qualities, that noble enthusiasm which impels to great deeds.

"Soldiers, the President of the United States shall be informed of your conduct on this occasion, and the voice of the representatives of the American nation shall applaud your valour, as your general now praises your ardour. The enemy is near; his sails cover the lakes; but the brave are united; and if he finds us contending among ourselves, it will be for the prize of valour and the rewards of fame." <sup>32</sup>

Jackson's stirring orders to citizens and soldiers on the issues of the war produced gratifying results. "General Jackson had electrified all hearts," one who was present observed. "New Orleans presented a very affecting picture . . . [of] citizens . . . preparing for battle . . . each in his vernacular tongue singing songs of victory. The streets resounded with Yankee Doodle, the Marseillaise Hymn, the Chant du Départ. . . ." <sup>33</sup>

On the morning of January 8, 1815, came the British attack. It was met by an American army that had been hastily trained, but which knew clearly what was at stake in the conflict. The results of the battle are known to every schoolboy — General Packenham, the British commander, was killed, together with over two thousand of his men. Only thirteen Americans were killed. It was the worst defeat a British army had suffered in years.

After the Battle of New Orleans Jackson delivered a farewell address to his troops. Like Washington he urged them to act as citizens in a democracy rather than as men intent upon imposing their will upon the people.

"Continue, my worthy companions," he declared, "to preserve on your passage to your homes, that patience, that subordination, that dignified and manly deportment which has so ennobled your characters." <sup>34</sup>

At a later period, in analysing the reasons for the great victory scored by the American troops in the Battle of New Orleans, Jackson stressed the fact that the soldiers had been educated to understand what they were fighting for and consequently "willed themselves to be free." <sup>35</sup>

## THE CIVIL WAR

THE Civil War was the first great modern war, a war that overshadowed any other war up to that time in geographical scope and in the men and materials involved. Similarly, the Union Army was the first army to include more than a million men under a single national command. It was composed almost entirely of men who had been civilians before the war. Never before in history had so many men been trained for military operations and never before had it been so important to teach such enormous masses of men why they were fighting.

Morale education in the Union Army was a burning issue throughout most of the Civil War. For a long time there was little agreement as to what form this education should take and what its content should be. In a large measure this was due to the conflicting opinions of the aims and purposes of the war. Most of those who had volunteered in the Union Army after the bombardment of Fort Sumter were not fighting for the abolition of slavery. They shared with Lincoln the belief that the only issue at stake in the war was "whether in a free government the minority have the right to break it up whenever they choose."<sup>36</sup>

But in the North there were people, some in the ranks of the Union Army itself, who believed from the very outset that the abolition of slavery was a major objective in the struggle. A minority at first, their ranks swelled as it became clear that the abolition of slavery was essential for the preservation of the Union. In the South several million Negro slaves awaited but a word to ally themselves with the North bodily as they already were in mind. Meanwhile, however, they were being utilized by the Confederacy to produce the sinews of war, thereby releasing

thousands of white men for armed service. Small wonder then that as time passed many people in the North as well as soldiers in the Union Army came to agree with Thaddeus Stevens, Republican Congressman from Pennsylvania, that "those who now furnish the means of war, but who are the natural enemies of slaveholders must be made our allies."<sup>37</sup> Gradually the Lincoln administration too began to see the necessity of combining the freedom of the slaves with the preservation of the Union as a major objective of the war. In September, 1862, Lincoln issued a preliminary Proclamation of Emancipation to take effect January 1, 1863.<sup>38</sup>

But those fighting for the emancipation of the slaves were opposed by powerful forces on the home front and in the Union Army itself. Copperhead speakers and newspapers had been denouncing the war since April, 1861, and now seeing the trend toward emancipation increasing, they intensified their drive to bring the war to a close by a negotiated peace. Copies of the *New York World*, the *New York Copperhead*, the *New York Herald*, the *New York Daily News* and other anti-war papers were circulated in the Union army and soldiers read that they were giving their lives for Negroes and for Mr. Lincoln. Not only did General George B. McClellan, commander of the Army of the Potomac, do nothing to stop the circulation of these defeatist papers, but his officers, many of them Peace-Democrats, gave every possible assistance to their reporters. Fitz John Porter, one of McClellan's closest advisors, wrote to Manton Marble, editor of the *New York World*:

"Your agents are here and I am with them. . . . This Army will cause a revulsion of opinion on its return home."<sup>39</sup>

Nor was this all. Any efforts to educate the soldiers that the war was a struggle for freedom and against slavery were quickly frustrated by McClellan and his subordinate officers. An interesting example involved the Hutchinson family, a troupe of singers who had used their talent before the war to advance the cause of abolition. Early in 1862 they were invited by Secretary of

War Simon Cameron to sing to the soldiers in the Army of the Potomac. As was to be expected, the Hutchinson singers soon got into difficulty with General McClellan and other officers who shared his belief that abolition of slavery was not the object of the war. Included in their programs was a fervent abolition poem by John Greenleaf Whittier set to the music of Luther's great hymn *Eine feste Burg ist unser Gott*. The words went in part:

*What gives the wheat fields blades of steel?  
What points the rebel cannon?  
What sets the roaring rabble's heel  
On the star-spangled pennon?  
What breaks the oath  
Of the men of the South?  
What whets the knife  
For the Union's life?—  
Hark to the answer: Slavery!*

*Then waste no blows on lesser foes  
In strife unworthy freemen;  
God lifts to-day the vail and shows  
The features of the demon!  
O North and South.  
Its victims both,  
Can ye not cry,  
"Let slavery die!"  
And Union find in freedom.*

It was too much to expect that this stirring battlecry for freedom would be appreciated by McClellan and his subordinate officers who assured the slaveowners that the Union Army did not intend to interfere in any way with their chattels, and forcibly returned to bondage Negroes who came over to the Union lines. General Kearny ordered the Hutchinsons to abandon their concert, and rebuked them furiously for their "incendiary" songs. "I think as much of a Rebel as I do of an Abolitionist," he informed them. General McClellan revoked the Hutchinson fam-

ily's permit to sing in the camps. But the Hutchinsons had faced stonings, beatings, and even more during their tours for the Abolitionist cause and were not deterred by orders signed by conservative army officers. Instead they took their case to the Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase, who listened to their story and asked them to write out the words of the "incendiary" song so that he could submit it to the cabinet. The next morning Chase informed John Hutchinson:

"I want to tell you that the poem was read at the cabinet meeting, and they were all in your favor. Mr. Lincoln remarked that it was just the kind of songs he wanted the soldiers to hear. He also said you should have the right to go among any of the soldiers where you were invited to sing."

Readmitted by Presidential order to the Union camps, the Hutchinson singers advanced the cause of freedom through such songs as "The Slave Mother," "Emancipation Song," "The Slave's Appeal," "Little Topsy's Song," "The Battle Cry of Freedom," and "Get Off the Track," the last-named one of the most famous of the Abolitionist songs.<sup>40</sup>

An outstanding example of morale education in the Union Army was the activity conducted by Brigadier-General August Willich. As a young man Willich had served in the Prussian army, but he had suffered exile because of his connection with the German revolutionary movement of 1848. He came to the United States in the 'fifties and soon rose to a prominent position in the German-American labor and Socialist movements. An ardent Abolitionist, he enlisted in the Union Army only thirteen days after Fort Sumter was fired upon. Though he had more military experience than many of the generals, he enlisted as a common soldier, and was enrolled in the Ninth Ohio, a regiment made up of German-Americans, all of whom were active in the labor movement. He was promoted to adjutant, later to colonel and major, and in May, 1862, to the ranks of Brigadier-General.<sup>41</sup>

In the fall of 1861, Willich was called upon to train and discipline an Indiana regiment. Here he had full opportunity



to apply his basic principle—that men who saw clearly why they were fighting would be the bravest and best soldiers. Willich instituted a system of lectures and discussion groups on the background and causes of the war, the nature of Negro slavery, the character of American free institutions and the necessity to defend them on the battlefield, and the international aspects of the Civil War. Under the leadership of Karl Marx, resolutions had been adopted by workingmen in England pledging support to the American Union and urging the emancipation of the Negro slaves. These were read to the soldiers by Willich and his lieutenants, and discussions usually followed.

The results of Willich's training and educational programs were evidenced in the action of the soldiers under fire. During the Battle of Shiloh, Willich's troops received commendations from many of the Union commanding officers. General Lew Wallace wrote that when his brigade was cut off and surrounded it was saved by Willich's regiment. "Fortunately," he observed, "before the enemy would avail themselves of their advantage by the necessary change of front, some fresh troops rushed against them and once more drove them back. For this favor my acknowledgements are especially due Col. August Willich and his famous regiment." General Buell was so impressed by the conduct of Willich's "splendid regiment" that he made it the subject of "General Orders, No. 23," during which he observed:

"The General tenders his thanks to the officers and soldiers of the regiment for their gallant and efficient conduct on this occasion. He commends it as a study and example to all other troops under his command, and enjoins them to emulate the discipline and instruction which insure such results." <sup>42</sup>

In July, 1863, Willich's regiment again distinguished itself—this time in the Battle of Liberty Gap. Willich's reports to the War Department tell the story of the part played by his troops and at the same time reveal the splendid morale of the soldiers.

"Cheering, the men went into the fight; cheering, they held their position; partly even without ammunition; cheering, they

replenished their cartridge-boxes, and formed ready for a battle. The highest ambition of a commander must be satisfied by being associated with such men, who, through their patriotism and a love for the institutions of their country, have attained a degree of efficiency which professional soldiers very seldom if ever reach. Instances—as when a man wounded in two places returns to the front after having his wounds dressed, and another, standing, without a wound, behind a tree, near two of his dead comrades, and keeping his position till he can get some cartridges and open fire again—are anything but uncommon." <sup>43</sup>

Yet, Willich always pointed out, there was nothing in the conduct of his men that could not be explained. It was simply an understanding of what they were fighting for.

"They have again and again proven," he wrote, "that they are true sons of the Republic, who value life only so long as it is the life of freemen, and who are determined to make the neck of every power, slavocratic or monarchical, bend before the commonwealth of the freemen of the United States of America." <sup>44</sup>

It was unfortunate that all army officers did not follow General Buell's advice and emulate the educational activities instituted by Willich. For the Copperheads were intensifying their drive to turn the soldiers against the war. They disseminated material in the Union Army relating gruesome stories of intense suffering among soldiers' families at home, advocated desertion, and emphasized again and again that the soldiers were fighting and dying for Negroes and for a tyrannical government. They even influenced parents to write to their sons in the Northern army urging them to desert. One parent advised his son to "come home, if you have to desert, you will be protected—the people are so enraged that you need not be alarmed if you hear of the whole of our Northwest killing off the abolitionists. I will send you some resolutions which we received with joy. . . ." <sup>45</sup> The enclosed resolutions had been adopted at a Copperhead meeting.

Meanwhile, the *New York World*, the *Chicago Times*, the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, and other defeatist papers circulated freely among the soldiers, and in each issue there were articles and

editorials inviting the soldiers to desert and gleefully reporting "the failure of efforts of the authorities to apprehend those who had fled from service." At the same time pamphlets distributed by the Society for the Diffusion of Political Knowledge, a leading Copperhead organization, circulated in the army, and informed the soldiers that the Constitution was being destroyed by the Lincoln administration, whose policy was one of "revolution and anarchy." Instead of fighting the Southern traitors, the soldiers were urged to turn their fire against the "revolutionists" in Washington. "It may not be too late to arrest the downward course of events," one Copperhead pamphlet warned.<sup>46</sup>

The demoralizing effect of the Copperhead propaganda on the fighting spirit of the Union soldiers was reported in officers' dispatches to the War Department telling of soldiers who permitted themselves to be captured in order that they might be sent home by the enemy under parole, of incendiary fires set by soldiers in the barracks, and of numerous desertions. In their private letters these same officers put the blame squarely on the shoulders of the Copperhead propagandists. The colonel of a Wisconsin regiment wrote to a member of his family:

"A very great deal of discouragement comes from the North—from Northern papers & from Northern speakers—who to save their own selfish ends would sacrifice all things. Scarcely do we read a good hopeful encouraging article in any of our papers, but nothing but howling against the Administration—against our Generals—detailing all the North has not accomplished—instead of what it has."<sup>47</sup>

But it was not enough to lament the effects of Copperhead propaganda on the soldiers. Action to put a stop to it was absolutely essential for victory. Early in 1863, J. L. Miner, who had a son in the Union Army, wrote to John Sherman, Senator from Ohio:

"There are some things that must be done at the North. The class of papers to which the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, and *Chicago Times*, belong must be suppressed, or, at least, not allowed to

come and circulate within army lines. They have exercised, and are exercising, a very depressing influence upon our men—causing many desertions; and much discontent. . . . Another evil growing out of this matter is writing to the men advising them that they should not support the [Emancipation] Proclamation; and enclosing printed extracts from all the treasonable newspapers at the north bearing upon this point."<sup>48</sup>

About the same time, George Wilkes, a close friend of General Hooker, wrote to Secretary Chase urging him to use his influence to wipe out Copperhead propaganda in the Union army:

"I have this morning written to General Hooker that large quantities of the [*New York*] *World* are daily sent in bulk for gratuitous distribution throughout the Army of the Potomac. I have likewise informed him that these papers are filled with audacious appeals to the soldiers not to fight under the present program of the Administration, and that unless we forbid their further introduction to his line, he may soon be without an army. Stanton is very properly averse to any measures calculated to trammel the circulation of the press, but I think if you would speak to him now, he would see that this irregular, illicit, and purposely mischievous distribution is not entitled to the consideration of immunities which apply to the ordinary laws of trade. I am inclined to think that General Hooker may act upon my suggestion, but a word from Mr. Stanton would make certain of it. . . ."<sup>49</sup>

Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton did more than give the word. On February 15, 1863, he issued a general order prohibiting the circulation of newspapers in the Army of the Potomac. On the heels of this decree came a special order permitting exceptions to be made in the case of specific newspapers—win-the-war papers. A little while later President Lincoln took action against Copperhead speakers who urged the soldiers to desert. When Clement L. Vallandigham, leader of the Copperheads, deliberately defied a military order prohibiting treasonous utterances, Lincoln ordered him arrested. And in answer to those who protested this action, Lincoln declared:

"Long experience has shown that armies cannot be maintained unless desertion shall be punished by the severe penalty of death. The case requires, and the law and the Constitution sanction, this punishment. Must I shoot a simple-minded soldier boy who deserts, while I must not touch a hair of a wily agitator who induces him to desert? This is none the less injurious when effected by getting a father, or brother, or friend into a public meeting, and there working upon his feelings till he is persuaded to write the soldier boy that he is fighting in a bad cause, for a wicked administration of a contemptible government, too weak to arrest and punish him if he shall desert. I think that, in such a case, to silence the agitator and save the boy is not only constitutional, but withal a great mercy." <sup>50</sup>

The decisive steps taken by the Commander-in-Chief and the Secretary of War to stop defeatist propaganda were of the utmost significance. But to be fully effective they had to be followed up by literature and educational activities to undo the damage of the Copperheads, and to arouse a real understanding of the basic issues in the war. On March 16, 1863, the *Washington Chronicle* called for a "regular system of public speaking" in the army to lift the morale of the soldiers by teaching them why they were fighting.

When Senator Justin Morrill of Vermont urged the organization of citizens' committees for the purpose of supplying the soldiers with loyal newspapers, Erastus Fairbanks, Governor of that state, hailed the suggestion and offered his co-operation. "Your suggestion about furnishing loyal newspapers for our soldiers in the field is important," he wrote to Senator Morrill. ". . . If a well adjusted plan should be accepted in which our friends will cooperate, I shall be disposed to contribute a small amount." <sup>51</sup>

Actually, more was being accomplished than the mere offering of suggestions. Late in 1862 the Sanitary Commission, set up to provide for the comfort of the soldiers, distributed throughout the Army of the Potomac ten thousand copies of Rev. H. W. Bellows' excellent pamphlet, *Unconditional Loyalty*. Soon soldiers were gathering in groups to discuss Bellows' denunciation

of the Copperheads and to express their approval of his statement that "to rally round the President—without question or dispute—is the first and most sacred duty of loyal citizens." <sup>52</sup>

Early in 1863 the American Tract Society established a Washington branch to supply the Army of the Potomac with loyal reading matter. Its periodical, the *Christian Banner*, published solely for the education of "the soldier and the sailor," contained on its cover the words:

"The Flag of Your Country . . . It does not bid capital iron its labor; it does not doom honest poverty to ignorance and degradation, and then call it 'white trash.' . . . Traitors tell us that you are demoralized; that you will not fight; that you have lost heart and pluck in this great contest for right. We will not believe it." <sup>53</sup>

In addition to publishing the *Christian Banner*, the American Tract Society sent thousands of "military pamphlets" to the Union Army. The United States Christian Commission, organized by Charles Stuart, a Philadelphia merchant, also circulated thousands of pamphlets among the soldiers. Even more important was the work of the American Unitarian Association. Close to a million copies—918,750 to be exact—of the army tracts published by the Association's Army Committee, were distributed. Considerable emphasis was placed in these tracts upon moral conduct and religious attitudes. But political education was not ignored. Treason to the nation was denounced as "the most flagrant of crimes" <sup>54</sup> and "devotion to the Union," "indignation against traitors," and "an honest love of liberty and hate of slavery" <sup>55</sup> were stressed as soldierly virtues. And in every tract there was some reference to the reasons why the men were fighting and the character of the war. Typical are the opening paragraphs of Charles Eliot Norton's tract, *The Soldier of the Good Cause*:

"The main characteristics of the war in which we of the Free States are engaged is that it is a war of the people. It is not a war of a class, a party, or a dynasty. In its most obvious aspect, as a war for the defence of the Constitution and the Union, of

established authority and regular government, against the attacks of a defeated, insolent, and unprincipled party, or in its essential nature as a war for the extending and establishing of liberty and justice, it is alike the cause of the people, demanding and receiving their efforts, their means, and their blood to carry it to a happy issue. It is not called amiss the 'Good Old Cause,' for it is but the latest incident in that struggle, of which all modern history is the record, between the selfish interests of individuals or a class, and the common interests of mankind; between despotism and freedom; between privileges and rights; between error and truth. . . .

"And as this is, above all, the cause of popular rights and institutions, so it is fitting that our soldiers should be, as happily they are drawn from the very heart of the people. Our battles are not to be fought by hirelings and mercenaries. The war forced upon us so suddenly is not to be carried on by a military class or by a standing army inured to service, but it has to be fought by soldiers hurriedly summoned from every class of life. Our army is the representative, in its heterogeneous composition, of the people itself. Native-born and adopted citizens, laborers and mechanics, students and ploughmen, men tenderly nurtured and men roughly bred, stand shoulder to shoulder in the ranks, each ready and eager to do his part in the work for his country and for liberty." <sup>56</sup>

Loyal newspapers, magazines, and books were distributed to the soldiers through reading agents working for the United States Christian Commission. Joseph C. Thomas, reading agent of the Army of the Cumberland, arranged with the *New York Tribune*, the *New York Evening Post*, the *New York Times*, and about sixty other newspapers and magazines to supply the army and navy with copies at half price. About sixty publishers in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Cincinnati also agreed to furnish their own publications to the army and navy at half price. And the Adams Express Company arranged to transport the literature to the army camps free of charge.

But Thomas, who was a genius at organization, was not content to leave it at this point. He instituted a "reading system for the army and navy" for the dissemination of "an ample and

wholesome literature" for our "national defenders . . . for their intelligence, patriotism and Christianity . . . for their contentment, obedience and courage. . . . The reading system therein unfolded," observed Thomas, "is the outgrowth of necessity and experience." This experience had convinced him that "our national defenders" craved reading matter, especially secular literature. The majority of the pamphlets distributed in the camps by the benevolent societies had more than satisfied the religious needs of the army. But this was not enough, for "almost as well might one dream of satisfying hunger with water, or quenching thirst with food, as to think of substituting religious literature for secular, or secular for religious. *Neither can properly supply the place of the other.*" <sup>57</sup>

By late 1863, Thomas had distributed 35,000 magazines to the army, the most important being *Harper's*, *Atlantic Monthly*, and the *United States Service Magazine*. In addition, Thomas set up in the camps a Loan Library system of 250 libraries. Books and pamphlets on the nature of the enemy and the reasons why the soldiers were fighting were especially emphasized in these collections.<sup>58</sup>

An organization which did extremely important work educating the soldiers was the Loyal Publication Society.<sup>59</sup> Worried by "the persistent efforts . . . to spread disloyal journals and documents through the armies of the United States," a group of pro-Union men in New York met and planned the formation of an organization to counteract Copperhead influence. On February 14, 1863, this society was formed, with Charles King, a New York merchant who had become president of Columbia College, as president, and John Austin Stevens, Jr., banker and pro-Union leader, secretary. Included on the executive and finance committees were Sinclair Jousey, president of the American News Company, Levi P. Morton, later Vice-President of the United States, James A. Roosevelt, and Colonel Le Grand B. Cannon.

The purpose of the organization was set forth in the following resolution:

"Resolved, that the object of this organization is and shall be confined to the distribution of journals and documents of unquestionable and unconditional loyalty throughout the United States, and particularly in the armies now engaged in the suppression of the *Rebellion*, and to counteract, as far as possible, the efforts now being made by the enemies of the Government and the advocates of a disgraceful *Peace*, to circulate journals and documents of a disloyal character." <sup>60</sup>

Arrangements were swiftly made with officers of the Union Army for the distribution of pamphlets among the soldiers. Between February 23 and April 4, 1863, thirty-six thousand journals were sent to Washington for distribution to the Army of the Rappahannock. During 1863 alone 42 pamphlets were published and more than 400,000 copies were sent to the army. With the assistance of the Adams Express Company, the Executive Committee in 1864 sent out 470,000 of its own and 45,000 other publications to the soldiers.<sup>61</sup>

In April, 1863, the Society joined with the New York and Philadelphia Union Leagues in sponsoring the publication of the *Army and Navy Journal* under the editorship of William Conant Church, formerly of the *New York Times*. The *Journal* said the Society, "will be conducted with such ability and upon such principles as cannot fail to make it a principal instrument for the promotion in our army and navy of that spirit of earnest patriotism and unconditional loyalty which is essential to enduring military means." <sup>62</sup>

The pledge was more than fulfilled. The *Army and Navy Journal* soon became a powerful medium for the development of a "spirit of earnest patriotism and unconditional loyalty" within the armed forces. Whether it was discussing a technical military problem or analyzing political issues, the *Journal* never failed to remind the Union soldiers and sailors that "this is a war of the people—no contest springing from the petty jealousies of court beauties, or the enmities, offences or personal ambition of minister or sovereign. Cruel and relentless as it is, this civil war, this bloody strife between brethren, so far as the North is

concerned, is waged at the will of the people." <sup>63</sup> Nor did it fail to remind them that nothing must be permitted to divert them from the essential task of defeating the enemies of the nation.

"... Until the Rebellion is crushed," it declared, "this Nation is in peril—in imminent and perpetual peril. While the Rebels can marshal hundreds of thousands of men against us—while in ten States they spurn the authority of the Government and defy its power, we can neither afford to indulge in idle repose, nor to waste our strength upon side issues. While a desperate foe, with a drawn knife, is struggling to get at our jugular, let us neither rest nor trifle until his head is crushed." <sup>64</sup>

In its second issue the *Journal* devoted considerable space to combating local jealousies and particularist feeling in the Union Army, much of which was the result of the activities of Confederate agents. In language reminiscent of Washington's "General Orders" to the Continental Army, the *Journal* pointed out:

"The Army of the Union is in every sense of the word a National Army. It is the Army of the United States, not of the States separately. The heresies concerning State Rights have been fatal to the peace of the Nation, and the notions concerning State troops have interfered with the efficiency of our Army, and have created real dangers to the Commonwealth. The rebellion should have taught us the worth and the meaning of national existence and national character. It has done so in part: the East and the West are bound closer together by the very efforts of our enemies to separate them. Each State has learned that its powers, its glory and its hopes, lie not in emulous and jealous rivalry with other States, but in the cordial, sympathetic relations of an indissoluble Union. And if this be the lesson learned by the people, still more should it be the lesson learned by the Army. The regiments of New England men are not the soldiers of New England, but of the Union. Minnesota troops charge side by side with troops from New York and Maryland, and the flag that leads and inspires them all is not the Star of Minnesota or the Excelsior banner of New York, but it is

the flag of the Union—the Stars and Stripes—the symbol of National honor and National life.”<sup>65</sup>

Learning that some Union soldiers, unable to rise above their prejudices, objected to the use of Negro troops, the *Journal* ran a long article on the services of Negro soldiers in the War for Independence. “The record is clear,” it declared, “that, from the beginning to the conclusion of the war of the Revolution, Negroes served in the continental armies with intelligence, courage, and steadfastness; and that important results in several instances are directly traceable to their good conduct.” It was certain that when the history of the Civil War was written it would record the fact that in this conflict too Negroes served “with intelligence, courage, and steadfastness,” and contributed in many ways to the final victory of the Union.<sup>66</sup>

*The Soldiers Friend* was another journal which devoted much space to the education of the soldiers on the basic issues of the war. “Let every man understand the issue,” it declared. “Let each man who values his own liberty, and that of his children, and the cause of freedom for the world, learn the true nature of our struggle, and resolve to do his duty in the great contest of the age.” To aid the soldiers to discover the “true nature of our struggle,” *The Soldiers Friend* featured an article entitled “What the South Is Fighting For?” which quoted an editorial from the *Richmond Enquirer* boasting that the Confederacy “based as it is upon the principles of natural subordination, is verily a distinct reaction against the whole course of the age’s civilization,” and proclaimed the fact that “for ‘Liberty, Equality, Fraternity,’ we have deliberately substituted Slavery, Subordination, Government.”

“The leaders of the Rebellion by this confession,” commented *The Soldiers Friend* of December, 1864, “are engaged in a reactionary measure against all the progressive hopes and inspiration of the present age. The cause of popular liberty has advanced in the New World only to be met by a bold and mighty effort at resistance. The advancing civilization, by which free labor, in all its democratic tendencies, was operating silently but power-

fully to eradicate slavery, needed a barrier to prevent its further encroachments upon the domain of the shackle and the slave. . . . The American Union was founded on the principles of liberty—and at the demand of Southern aristocrats it must perish, in order that from its ruins might be constructed an empire founded on slavery. The democratic principles of free government must die, in order to give renewed life to the aristocracy of power and privilege. For this purpose all the resources of the people have been taxed, their wealth squandered, their homes desolated, and their lives sacrificed, in order that a government might be established in which the few might rule the many, and the capitalist should own the laborer. . . .”

The Women’s National Loyal League, headed by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, also did excellent work in educating the soldiers. *An Address to the Soldiers*, by Angelina Grimke Weld, was one of many pamphlets distributed in the Union Army by the Women’s Loyal League as well as one of the finest expositions on the nature of the Civil War. It went in part:

“Soldiers of our Second Revolution—Brethren: This war is not as the South falsely pretends a war of races, nor of sections, nor of political parties, but a war of Principles; a war upon the working-classes, whether white or black; a war against Man, the world over. In this war, the black man was the first victim; the workingman of whatever color the next; and now all who contend for the rights of labor, for free speech, free schools, free suffrage, and a free government, securing to all life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, are driven to do battle in defense of these or to fall with them, victims of the same violence that for two centuries has held the black man, a prisoner of war. . . . The progress of the war has proved that slavery is the lifeblood of the rebellion. Hence the necessity of the President’s Proclamation of Freedom to the slaves. The nation is in a death struggle. It must either become one vast slaveocracy of petty tyrants, or wholly the land of the free.”<sup>67</sup>

A soldier, on reading this pamphlet, wrote home jubilantly: “When the women are so zealous in their loyalty, the Republic is safe.”<sup>68</sup>



Another organization which did important work in educating the soldiers on the issues of the war was the Workingmen's Democratic-Republican Association of New York, set up early in 1864 by trade unionists. The Association published a monthly journal, *The Iron Platform*, copies of which were sent to the soldiers. The war, this workingmen's journal informed the fighting men in issue after issue, was not merely a question of whether class or political party should control the government. It was not only an issue of internal improvements, and of homestead act, but however important these were:

"Our contest has a greater issue than these involved," said the September 1864 issue, "and it is of the utmost importance that every working man understand it clearly. If he would be a freeman, and enjoy the blessings of liberty for himself and his children—if he would be true to himself and to the working men of the South—if he would be true to the interests of Labor throughout the World—he must work and vote to overthrow rebellion and treason and maintain the government at every cost. . . .

"We are now engaged as a nation in fighting the battle of Democracy against Aristocracy and Tyranny. . . . We are today fighting for Democratic government against the combined force of Aristocracy in the South, which believes that all laborers should be slaves—and the advocates and agents of Monarchy in Europe who believe in the divine right of Kings.

"All the influences and interests of the advocates and friends of tyranny and aristocracy, in the Old World as well as the New, are today arrayed in the effort to destroy the only democratic government in the world. . . . We are a nation, the advance guard in the cause of human liberty and progress. At this hour we are doing picket duty, on a grand scale in the great struggle of human rights against absolutism and despotism."

Letters from the soldiers to *The Iron Platform* told of the valuable work this paper was performing in educating the fighting men. "We have had many gratifying testimonials from the army," the editors of the journal declared with pride, "in regard to the pleasure and interest with which our publication

are read by the patriotic men who have left their homes to defend our country in the hour of peril." One testimonial came from Major-General A. E. Burnside who wrote that the activities of the Workingmen's Democratic-Republican Association "meet with my hearty approval."<sup>69</sup>

Pamphlets, tracts, and newspapers were all very well, but there was no certainty that the soldiers would fully understand what was in the reading matter. Moreover, quite a few soldiers could not even read. To meet these problems, Joseph C. Thomas of the Christian Commission outlined a plan whereby field, staff, line officers, and chosen non-commissioned soldiers would be trained to lecture and organize discussion groups on the literature sent into the army.<sup>70</sup>

Major Benjamin A. Willis of the 19th New York Volunteers delivered the following lecture to his troops:

"This war was forced upon [us]; it came through no fault of the patriotic North. It was begotten by the existence of anti-republican elements, whose growth depended not upon moral suasion, but upon the exercise of power; losing that power, it lost its capacity of resistance and was imperilled. You know what I mean, the Slave Power to which the whole patronage of the Government had been subordinate. Commercial interests, manufacturing interests, all, save the agriculture, and literature of the country—which, too, unhappily part-corrupted—were dragooned into its service. Presses had been subsidized, senators stricken down with bludgeons, votaries of freedom martyred, freedom of speech and freedom of the press denied, religion corrupted, the virgin soil of our territories soaked with innocent blood, and tales of woe, enacted, sad enough to draw pity from the very stones—all for the benefit of that pernicious power, that it might be enlarged, popularized and nationalized. But in vain. Though truth slumbered, it was not *dead*: the earnest appeals of her vigilant sentinels reached and stirred the popular heart. Freedom asserted herself, struggled for supremacy and triumphed. The Slave Power lost its props, foresaw its doom, and to save itself attempted the murder of the Republic. Thus came the war; hence Slavery *vs.* Freedom is its logical issue."<sup>71</sup>

Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Colonel of the 1st South Carolina Volunteers, a regiment of freed Negroes, also did splendid work in educating his troops. It was hardly a regiment when Higginson took over, but rather a mass of raw, undrilled, undisciplined recruits, for the most part illiterate. By combining educational discussions on various aspects of the war with rigorous drills, Higginson speedily accomplished the task of preparing the regiment for effective combat duty.<sup>72</sup>

A good deal of the work of leading discussions and bringing home to the soldiers the full meaning of the literature fell on the shoulders of army chaplains—"the fighting Abolition Chaplains," as Ralph Waldo Emerson called them.<sup>73</sup> These men were truly the orientation officers of the Union Army.\*

One army chaplain, Reverend E. Payson Roe, delivered the following stirring sermon to his troops:

"Soldiers! go forward with me a half-century in your imaginations. In 1900, look upon the land for which you are now toiling, suffering, and bleeding. The same dear old flag, with a throng of new stars upon it, waves over the entire continent. From the length and breadth of the land there goes a confused sound. It is not the wild uproar of battle. It is not the fierce discord of internal strife. Listen closely, and you will soon distinguish not the clank of chains, but of busy machinery; the hum of children's voices at school; the song of the reaper from fields once enriched by your blood; the traffic of many feet in the marts of commerce; and the prayers and praises of happy and united families. . . .

"Enter with me the study of some Bancroft or Motley† at that age. He is describing the Great Rebellion. As we glance

\* It was an army chaplain—Chaplain McCabe—who introduced J. Ward Howe's powerful Abolition song, *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, to the Union Army. Chaplain McCabe sang it again and again to the soldiers, and soon it was to be sung by every regiment. The song itself was one of the greatest factors in building morale in the Union Army. (See Mary Barstow Greenbie, *Lincoln's Daughters of Mercy* [New York, 1944], pp. 80.)

† George Bancroft and John Lothrop Motley were distinguished American historians.

over his shoulder and follow his historic pen, we read the following words: 'The most remarkable feature in the great movement of the last century is the part taken by the common people at home, and the private soldiery in the field. The masses were far in advance of their rulers, and dictated, or at least hastened, those measures which destroyed slavery and freed the American people from the heaviest millstone that ever clogged a nation's advance. They cheerfully bore every burden, and refused to listen to any terms that were not in the highest degree honorable and conducive to general liberty. But the conduct of our enlisted men excited the admiration even of our enemies. Plain artisans, mechanics, and farmers, they left their comfortable homes, their fathers and mothers, their wives and children, and went forth to meet, not only a fierce and sanguinary foe, but the still more deadly influence of disease and exposure in a malarious climate. Neither sickness nor wounds; neither the tyranny of petty officers, nor the fears of Southern prison-pens shaming in their horrors the Spanish torturers; nor even death itself, in all its most terrible forms, would shake their stern determination to preserve, maintain, and hand down all and more than they received from their fathers. . . . In falling, they lifted the country they loved, with its beneficent institutions, high above all danger, and enthroned it, like their granite hills, in the heart of a loyal and grateful people. They swept slavery and oppression from their own land, and struck it a fatal blow in all lands. That today we are the strongest, happiest, freest, and most Christian people on the face of the globe, is due mainly to the plain blue-coated soldier and sailor, who with musket and cutlass, did not fail in their hard duty during the Great Rebellion.'

" . . . This vision will be realized. Your blue uniform will one day be classic drapery in the halls of art.

"The time is coming, when it were better to have been a soldier of the Union than to have been a King."<sup>74</sup>

"I have just been listening to an address to us soldiers by our worthy chaplain," wrote a soldier to his sister. "It was a fine thing, worthy the man, the place, and the occasion. . . . His advice to us, still to be *men* and *true soldiers*, was well-timed, and I, for one, feel a renewed determination to be worthy the



recollections and kind remembrances of those I left among the green hills in my own native State.”<sup>75</sup> Little wonder Union officers could say: “We count our Chaplain as good as a hundred men in a fight.”<sup>76</sup>

Lincoln himself played an important part in the program instituted to educate the soldiers on the fundamental issues in the war. The Commander-in-Chief spoke frequently to the troops, and he rarely lost an opportunity on such occasions to explain what the struggle was about. In an address to the 166th Ohio Regiment Lincoln talked about the democratic nature of the Union cause and the democratic objectives of the war:

“I almost always feel inclined, when I happen to say anything to soldiers, to impress upon them, in a few brief remarks, the importance of success in this contest. It is not merely for today but for all time to come, that we should perpetuate for our children’s children that great and free government which we have enjoyed all our lives. I beg you to remember this, not merely for my sake, but for yours. I happen, temporarily, to occupy this White House. I am a living witness that any one of your children may look to come here as my father’s child has. It is in order that each one of you may have, through this free government which we have enjoyed, an open field and a fair chance for your industry, enterprise, and intelligence; that you may all have equal privileges in the race of life, with all its desirable human aspirations. It is for this the struggle should be maintained, that we may not lose our birthright—not for only one, but for two or three years. The nation is worth fighting for, to secure such an inestimable jewel.”<sup>77</sup>

The educational activities to overcome Copperhead propaganda in the Union Army and to clarify the issues of the war produced amazing results.\* By the summer of 1863 the morale of the troops had been considerably improved. Letters sent home by the soldiers at the front revealed this most clearly. One soldier wrote that as a result of the lectures and pamphlets and

\* General Garfield pointed out that the educational activities in the Union Army had “made the Army an Abolition army.” (Quoted in *Pacific Tribune* [Olympia, Washington], May 14, 1864.)

newspapers the men were now reading an entire change had come over them.

“One hears not that careless, boyish laugh, sees no childish playing ball or racing . . . but here we have sober, thinking men—men who realize the situation of our country and feel the great responsibility that rests on them.”<sup>78</sup>

Letters also indicate that once enlightened the soldiers in turn began to educate the civilians and hearten their support of the war. A letter from a soldier to his family reads:

“Copperheads and copperheadism have no friends in the army. The soldiers know full well that their infernal treason is doing much to prolong the war. We feel indignant to think there are any citizens in the free and prosperous North, infamous enough to be working against a government that has protected them so faithfully, and secured to them more rights and greater privileges than any nation under heaven. . . . We feel indignant, as we are marching through long cold nights and drenching storms to think of this!”<sup>79</sup>

A trade unionist in the ranks of the Federal Army wrote to *Fincher’s Trades’ Review*, the outstanding labor paper of the Civil War era, urging it to rally labor on the home front against the Copperheads and to defeat the drive for a negotiated peace. In the issue of June 20, 1863, we read:

“We are out here voluntarily, sacrificing all the comforts of home, the society of our friends, and all we hold dear in this world to maintain the constitution and the Union against a cursed Rebellion which, gaining strength through many years of secret treachery, threatened at one time to overwhelm our land. We, the soldiers of the Union, looking back to the many battlefields crimsoned with the blood and whitened with the bones of thousands of our murdered comrades, with the very ground beneath our feet crying for vengeance, cannot ask for peace on any other terms than the entire subjection of the Rebels in arms against the best Government God ever gave to man.”

Just as important as these letters were the numerous resolutions adopted at formal meetings of officers and men of various

regiments denouncing the Copperheads and pledging to fight until the unconditional surrender of the enemy had been achieved. The following resolutions adopted at a meeting of officers and soldiers of the 150th Regiment, Pennsylvania volunteers, held at regimental headquarters, near Belle Plain, on March 12, 1863, are typical:

"Whereas, After nearly two years of the most patriotic sacrifices on the part of our people, and the most desperate trials and struggles on the part of our army to restore our shattered Union and maintain our national honor, our Government finds itself assailed by a class of persons at home who would yield it, Judah-like, into the hands of the enemy, or sully it by a dishonourable compromise with the hosts of treason, and who are even now trying to induce the masses to resist its lawful authority in order the sooner to gain their hellish ends; therefore,

"Resolved, That we hereby express our firm and unalterable devotion to our Government and its laws, and declare our determination to stand by it at all hazards, pledging to the restoration of its entire authority, 'our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.'

"Resolved, That we look upon all proposals, from whatever source, to give up this struggle on any other terms than the unconditional submission of the traitors in arms against their country, as disgraceful to those who originate, and to those who, for a moment, lend an ear to them.

"Resolved, That we condemn and repudiate as unworthy sons of their country those who, staying at home in the North, are striving to cripple the hands of their country's defenders who, under the garb of a false patriotism, and an assumed zeal for the Constitution, cavil at all measures calculated to prostrate the rebellion, and who endeavor to hold back and paralyze the strong arm of right, now outstretched to crush the foul treason which attacks the life of the nation.

"Resolved, That we have no sympathy of feeling in common with those who, from real or pretended admiration of any man or general, would make their earnestness in their country's cause, or perhaps their loyalty, dependent on, or subordinate to their personal feelings; that we are ready and anxious to fight for our country under whatever commander we may be placed

and under none with greater alacrity than our present commander-in-chief.

"Resolved, That as we believe that 'fighting for Southern rights' means nothing more than warring for the extension of slavery, which we regard as a *curse to the land*, and a *great moral wrong*, we hail with joy the President's proclamation doing away with that institution in every State in which rebellion exists, and hope soon to see it forever blotted from our soil.

"Resolved, That our feeling towards traitors, both North and South, is one of implacable hatred, and that, while this army has bullets for those at the South, it has also heels broad enough and heavy enough to crush the vile 'copperheads' of the North if they persist in their insidious attempts to weaken and overthrow the Government."<sup>80</sup>

The Copperheads themselves gave the best testimony that the defeatist campaign to turn the soldiers against the war had been frustrated by the educational program of 1862. In an editorial on March 3, 1863, the *New York World* took a stand against the soldier vote, admitting that the soldiers would vote for unconditional surrender of the enemy rather than for negotiated peace. Again, on June 1, 1863, S. S. Cox, Ohio Democrat and colleague of Vallandigham, complained in a letter to Mantle Marble:

"I despair of success because of the soldier vote which is aloof from all social and political influences. We cannot reach it and its prejudice against Vallandigham is ineradicable and bitter. . . ."<sup>81</sup>

But the Copperhead Democrats did more than lament the prospects of an overwhelming soldier vote for the continuation of the war until victory was achieved. They sought in every possible way to deprive the soldiers of the right to vote. In Illinois the Democratic majority in 1863 defeated such a bill; two years later a Republican majority passed the measure. In New York a bill was passed by a Republican legislature in 1863 only to be vetoed by the Democratic Governor. In Pennsylvania all the Democratic members of the Legislature voted against an

amendment to the state constitution granting the soldiers the right. Every Democrat in the New Hampshire Legislature voted against a bill allowing the soldiers the right to vote in the field for members of Congress and presidential electors, even though the bill contained a provision that it should not take effect until the Supreme Court had declared it constitutional. In other states the same story was repeated. As Josiah Henry Benton points out:

"Upon a review of this legislation one is impressed with the fact that the soldiers' voting bills were uniformly supported by the Republicans and uniformly opposed by the Democrats. . . No soldiers' voting bill, or Constitutional amendment permitting soldiers to vote in the field, was ever passed by a legislature which had a Democratic majority. The Democrats constantly opposed any legislation to give the soldiers a right to vote in the field."<sup>82</sup>

Eventually the bitter Copperhead opposition was overcome and most of the states allowed the soldiers to vote in the field. Where this was not the case, the War Department secured franchises for soldiers to enable them to vote at home.

The soldier vote in the Presidential election of 1864 went three to one for Lincoln. A soldier stationed in Florida expressed the sentiments of the vast majority of the fighting men, when he wrote:

"... It is election day, but there is no more stir than usual, the boys having made up their minds that Old Abe had better remain at the White House four years more and see the thing through. There were but two votes for McClellan in our Company! Don't you believe that nonsense that our folks have been preaching to you—the war will end just as quick if Lincoln is not re-elected, if not quicker. If he is elected it will do more to discourage the rebels than to lose a dozen battles—they will see we are in earnest and mean to put the thing through. . . ."

Together with the civilian population the soldiers had spoken. They had determined to see the war through until the enemy was crushed. That determination was in large measure the result

of the excellent educational program carried on for more than a year and a half among the soldiers at the front. That program had given them a clear understanding as to why they were fighting, a hatred of those in the North who aided and abetted the enemy, and a realization that the war must be fought until the enemy surrendered unconditionally.

As one soldier put it: "There is just one little thing that we soldiers want, and shall have, whether it takes one or twenty years; and that is complete victory."<sup>84</sup>

Just as the crushing of the Copperhead drive to sow the seeds of defeatism in the Union Army, coupled with the intensive educational program to lift the morale of the soldiers, was in no small degree responsible for the final victory of the North, so the collapse of the morale of the Confederate soldiers was a prominent reason for the final defeat of the Confederacy. The Confederacy did not face the problem of maintaining the morale of its soldiers from the very outset of the war. For the first two years of the war, winning victories and suffering few defeats made for a high morale. But at the same time there were thousands in the upland counties of the South who had never approved of secession, and who had little interest in a war for the protection of slavery. These men were conscripted into the Confederate Army, but many had no desire to fight for a government in the establishment of which they had had no voice.\* Consequently, quite a few deserted and went over to the Union Army early in the war. One of these deserters sent a letter to Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy, before he left, in which he wrote: "... And now, bastard President of a po-

\* For example, the *Raleigh* [North Carolina] *Standard* editorialized in March 1861: "There is no democracy in the action of the Southern oligarchs. The people were rushed out of the Union without the privilege of being heard at the polls; and in Georgia the idea of the people having the right in the last resort to shape their own destinies was sneered at by [Howell] Cobb and [Robert] Toombs. Such things cannot endure. A revulsion will take place sooner or later which will vindicate the majesty and power of the people and sweep the oligarchs from the face of the earth." (Reprinted in *New York Tribune*, Mar. 15, 1861.)

litical abortion, farewell. 'Scalp-hunters,' relic, pole, and chiv-  
rous Confederates in crime, good-bye. Except it be in the arms  
of the Union, you will not again see the conscript." <sup>85</sup>

As long as optimism was rampant over the early victories of  
the Confederate armies and the excellent prospects of European  
recognition, the leaders of the Confederacy paid little attention  
to the problem created by desertions. Nor did they bother much  
with the issue of explaining to the soldiers why the war was  
being fought. Thousands of religious tracts and pamphlets were  
distributed by church organizations for the soldiers in the Con-  
federate Army. The Evangelical Tract Society, organized in  
Petersburg, Virginia, in 1861, published the *Army and Navy  
Messenger*; the Presbyterian Board of Publication distributed a  
monthly paper, the *Soldier's Visitor*; Southern Methodists issued  
the *Soldier's Paper* and the *Army and Navy Herald*; and the  
Baptists sponsored the publication of a sheet called the *Soldier's  
Friend*. But the tracts, pamphlets and papers "were devoted  
largely to reading matter calculated to create abhorrence of the  
evils most common to army life, and to inspire soldiers to Chris-  
tian living." The first issue of the *Army and Navy Herald* pre-  
sents a typical picture of all the periodicals. The articles were  
as follows: "Come to Jesus," "A Model Boy," "The Whisker  
Erysipelas," "Washington's Prayer," "The Scoffer Rebuked," and  
"The Soldier's Death." <sup>86</sup> In an editorial the publishers an-  
nounced that their aim was "to furnish the reader with such  
original productions and eclectic Christian literature as will, in  
some humble measure compensate for the absence of books . . .  
and elevate his conceptions to the comprehension of a purer and  
more peaceful era . . . than the strifes of the times." Instead  
of seeking to educate the soldiers on why they were fighting, the  
sponsors of most of these publications sought to get their minds  
off the war.

As the war years passed the morale of the soldiers fighting  
for the Confederacy sank rapidly and war weariness replaced  
the initial wave of enthusiasm. Discontent became rampant  
among the soldiers as a result of the inequality of sacrifices. T

exemption from military service of all who owned twenty or  
more slaves coupled with the ability of the wealthy to purchase  
substitutes aroused enormous dissatisfaction in the Confederate  
army. Gradually it became clear to many soldiers that it was  
"the rich man's war and the poor man's fight." "It took the heart  
and nerve out of many poor soldiers," writes a student of the  
subject, "and they took to the dens and caves, where sometimes  
by concerted effort they prepared to fight the battles of self-  
defense against what seemed a wealth-sponsored Government,  
in preference to the battles of sacrifice for their wealthy com-  
patriots against the Federal armies." Most of the deserters came  
from the mountain yeomanry—the common people of the  
South—who "had an innate dislike for the war for the perpetua-  
tion of slavery which they knew was the bed-rock of the power  
and prestige of their proud neighbors of the lowlands. This  
natural opposition was fanned into a burning passion when  
they were led to believe that the wealthy were skulking, and  
when they observed that the mere pittance paid them could  
never save their large families from abject misery against prices  
ever soaring because of war and speculation." <sup>87</sup> A letter from  
a Mississippian in the ranks of the Confederate army expresses  
the sentiments of the vast majority of those who deserted in such  
alarming numbers:

"Oh, Shame, where is thy blush, look at Lincoln's emancipa-  
tion proclamation and let the world say what we are fighting  
for, and yet we who have but little or nothing at stake but  
honor, are called on to do the fighting and to do the hard  
drudgery and bear the burden, and brunt of the battle while  
the rich, and would be rich are shirking and dodging in every  
way possible to shun the danger." <sup>88</sup>

In the North, too, the poorer classes were furious over the  
profiteering of the rich; here, too, there were complaints against  
the class nature of the Conscription Act, which permitted the  
wealthy to purchase substitutes. But the great majority of the  
soldiers in the Union Army rejected the efforts of the Copper-  
heads to use these aspects of the war to turn them against the

government. These soldiers knew what they were fighting for and they knew that the fate of the plain people of America was being decided on the battlefields of Shiloh, Gettysburg, and Vicksburg. But in the Confederate Army too many soldiers were asking the same question: "What are we fighting for?" And the leaders could not give a satisfactory answer to this question. Certainly it was no answer to tell these soldiers, as did the *Richmond Enquirer*, that "for 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity' we have deliberately substituted Slavery, Subordination, Government." Nor was it much use to tell the common soldiers, as did the *Southern Confederacy*, that but for slavery "the poor would occupy the position in [Southern] society that the slave does—as the poor in the North and in Europe do," hence they should be willing to fight and die for slavery as they would for their "own liberty and the dearest birthright of freemen." Such answers only caused the declining morale of the soldiers to sink further, for they only gave poignancy to the slogan "the rich man's war and the poor man's fight."<sup>89</sup>

The only thing the Confederate leaders did to meet the situation was to stimulate the organization of religious revival meetings in the camps. That there was need of religious services in the armed forces during the Civil War is understandable. But the popularity of revival meetings in the Confederate Army after 1863 is to be explained mainly by the inability of the leaders to present a clear-cut and satisfactory reason as to why the soldiers were fighting. Fearing to raise the question of the true cause of the war in discussions with the soldiers, they were forced to resort to methods that would take their minds off these issues. But this policy did not lift the sinking morale of the fighting men. Thus it was that at the very time when an educational program in the Union Army had succeeded in raising the morale of the soldiers, the failure and inability of the Confederate leaders to institute a similar program was resulting in a collapse of morale. On May 26, 1864, Charles A. Dana, famous editor, wrote to Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of War in Lincoln's Cabinet, from Virginia:

"One of the most important results of the campaign this far is the entire change which has taken place in the feelings of the armies. Rebels have lost all confidence, and are already morally defeated. This army has learned to believe that it is sure of victory. . . . On part of the rebels this change is evinced, not only by their not attacking, even when circumstances seem to invite it, but by the unanimous statements of prisoners taken from them."<sup>90</sup>

No single factor can account for this change. The emergence of a true understanding of why they were fighting and what was at stake in the war was an important factor in the new spirit evinced by the Union soldiers, while the utter lack of understanding of what they were fighting for, other than to uphold the property of the slaveowners, had much to do with the collapse of the morale of the Confederate soldiers.<sup>91</sup> The pamphlets, tracts, publications distributed by so many organizations to the Union soldiers as well as the lectures and discussions by officers and chaplains, were bearing fruit. Their final vindication was the victory of the Union Army in April, 1865, when General Lee surrendered and the forces of freedom triumphed.

During the War for Independence, the War of 1812, and the Civil War, the commanding officers of the American armed forces made an earnest effort to bring home to the fighting men the reasons why they were fighting. This effort varied from the simple but eloquent orders to the troops issued by Washington and Jackson to the elaborate pamphlets and other literature circulated in the Union Army during the Civil War. But whether simple or detailed, the material distributed to the soldiers was crucial in overcoming the influence of divisive and defeatist groups and in raising the morale of the soldiers. This in turn was crucial in the achievement of final victory.

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